Interview with Madeleine (Maddy) R. McCoy
conducted by Mary Lipsey for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective

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Mary: This is Mary Lipsey and we are in the Virginia Room in Fairfax, VA on August 8th, 2008 and I am interviewing Maddy McCoy who is involved with the slave inventory data base for Fairfax County. Maddie can you give us a little bit of your background, where you grew up, went to school, etc.

Maddie: I was born actually at DeWitt Army Hospital at Ft. Belvoir so I am a Fairfax County native but we moved to Bethesda when I was about six weeks old. So I grew up in Bethesda, Maryland and I did all my education there. I went to a Quaker school for high school and then I actually left and lived in Israel for five years. Let's see what else.

Mary: College.

Maddy: I went to London Guildhall University where I got my degree in jewelry design, silversmithing and allied historic crafts. And um that's where I met my husband also, not at the University but through a friend. And our son was born over there; so I lived over there for about 3 ½ years and then we came back here.

My husband is a teacher and I guess he teaches in Providence District he teaches at Flint Hill. He is a fourth grade teacher at Flint Hill School private school. And so we moved back to Fairfax I should say and we've been in the City of Fairfax for about six years now, just about six years we moved back this way.

Mary: Now, what are allied historic crafts? What are those?

Maddy: Exactly, I specialized in enameling, that kind of….

Mary: Now are you saying allied or alloy?

Maddy: Allied.

Mary: Allied, see I'm thinking the Germans allies.

Maddy: A-l-l-i-e-d allied historic crafts, yes I know.

Mary: I've never heard of that.

Maddy: Well it's a British Degree.

Mary: Okay.

Maddy: You know it's an English University and they do things just a little different. It is kind of funny.

Mary: It is a little different.

Maddy: Then I guess I should say that I went back to school, actually found out about the Historic Preservation Program at NOVA based out of the Loudoun campus. I started taking classes; it immediately caught my interest. And I started taking classes there to - oh gosh it's been three and a half years - it's been three and a half years and it's a Certificate Program in Historic Preservation and I completed that in two years. So I've been technically out of school for a year and a half from that program. But, that was really the life changing program.

You know I have always been interested in History. When I was a kid I wanted to be an Archeologist in kindergarten, not on career day I don't even know what they called it but I know there was a call home because I was the only kid in class that wanted to be an Archeologist. And they didn't have books in the library, the school library on archeology and they said could you – do you have anything at home because we had to do like this book report. I don't know but I wanted to be an Archeologist, and I always dug up the back yard.

Mary: I was wondering if you did that.

Maddy: Absolutely, absolutely old houses, old landscapes; even as a kid my dad would still tell stories that I would sit in the back seat of the car, this was in Montgomery County mostly in Maryland and I would have different classifications for different kinds of houses and the landscape of course was very rural and old in some parts and I would call things Little House on the Prairie houses and they'd

have to have certain roof lines. And so I had like these little different classifications. So I have always been interested in history, different aspects of history, I don't know different things that caught my fancy over the years. So I have always had that. I am a graveyard person, a cemetery person always been fascinated in cemeteries even as a kid. And that's something my dad I use to do when I was a little kid, he really enjoys that too. And we would go and stop you know and check things out and just sort of wandered through. I have very fond memories of that but that has always been there.

When I studied in London it was very much more of the material culture, very much more of the aesthetic you know, the precious objects. Not always, silversmithing is kind of crude but it was sort of much more geared towards decorative items, nothing about landscape or anything but history of design and things like that. It's all fascinating to me.

It was the Historic Preservation Program, that really sort of put - it was sort of like the life experience I had come to at that point. You know I'm in my early thirties at this point and I am going oh, right this all makes perfect sense. Here I am and it was the perfect program for me at the perfect time, it just fit and off I went and I just absolutely loved it. I had a great teachers and it was just great.

And so I started volunteering and that was how I technically got to the Virginia Room; is I had to do an internship for the certificate and I chose and I lived down the street. And I had always had liked the Virginia Room, I had been in a few times but I knew Brian Conley worked here and that was the thing, it was that cemetery connection. I was like, you know what if Brian works here I didn't know Brian but I was like this must you know – this can't be all bad.

Mary: Explain what Brian's connection is to cemeteries.

Maddy: Right, Brian Conley is sort of like the cemetery guru of Fairfax County. He has written, he has his own books that he has done; he is the guy that likes to get out in the field and look and see. You know the genealogical aspect is interesting to him I know, but that's not the thing it's more of the necrogeography and that is a very interesting term but it's very correct. Necrogeography it's the

landscape it's the study of the landscape of death and that is just to understand what that looks like on the landscape that's really his passion.

And so I figured you know what this is somebody I can learn from and absolutely he has just been incredible mentor. He has been promoted and he has moved on in the last year to the archives but I learned a ton from him. So I thought that would be a great place to do an internship. And I think they were kind of like all right well come on along fine and I started working on pictures of the Porter Collection and identifying different things and that was interesting to.

But what happened is that one day Malcolm Richardson called. Rich Richardson is how most people know him but I always called him Malcolm Richardson and I would tell him that and he would always be like why and I'd be like I don't know I just can't call you Rich. I don't know why he was always Malcolm Richardson to me and he passed away about a year and a half ago. But he's known in the county as a very, very well-known well respected amateur archeologist, historian, genealogist all about history guy. He worked with Doug Owsley from the Smithsonian for many years, just a really fascinating guy and another cemetery guy.

So I remember overhearing a conversation between Brian on the one end in the Virginia Room, sorry and Malcolm Richardson on the other end and it was probably over three years ago so it was like maybe April or May of 2005. And they were talking about the Guinea Road cemetery and I am only hearing Brian's end but I'm like gosh, I don't know what they're but I got – it was like I gravitated - I think I stood next to Brian. I just I wanted to hear, it was just very powerful. You know there were complications; there were problems it was a site of mystery intrigue, debate, conflict it was a really, really, it was just a very interesting study.

Mary: Now let me interrupt you for a minute cause you have to explain what the Guinea Road Cemetery is.

Maddy: The Guinea Road Cemetery is a cemetery on the southwest corner of Little River Turnpike and Guinea Road in Annandale, Fairfax area. It used to be called Ilda. And Guinea Road Cemetery, it was debated for a long time whether

or not there was even burials there. VDOT (Virginia Department of Transportation) wanted to widen the road, had wanted to widen Little River Turnpike for years. There were people um who knew through oral history, family oral history that there was a black cemetery there. Black people buried there is kind of what I would hear over and over, there are black people buried there, from different people. And this was going on for about, I mean I came into this three years ago but this had been going on for about 20 years since about the mid 1980's. Um I know that it was discussed in Braddock's True Gold, Dennis Howard being the family descendant, who was incredibly - I say this in a positive, very assertive I want to say even highly assertive advocate for this cause and for his family, his heritage, his kin, his people you know I mean incredible, incredible.

Mary: Who are believed to have been buried in the Guinea Road Cemetery?

Maddy: Who are believed to be buried in the Guinea Road Cemetery? I mean just really the perseverance he showed was I think amazing, amazing. Ruffled feathers absolutely but boy did he get the job done. And you know I mean it's just - so this has just been and Malcolm Richardson had been working on the Guinea Road Cemetery and Brian had too since the eighties. They both went and walked the site in the eighties you know and found a few grave depressions. It had been a complicated thing.

But I overhear this conversation and I'm like well this sounds very intriguing. Brian gave me the file which was big at the time. He said take it home and we don't usually take stuff home from here. But he said take it home it's big, peruse it at your leisure. I sat up until three o'clock in the morning - I read the file - I couldn't stop reading the file. It was so intriguing to me it was such a mystery, and it was such a hidden history and it's the paving over of this hidden history.

This whole, you know I take issue with you know as much as Mount Vernon is important you know obviously George Washington this is incredibly important but you know his slaves were important too. So were the white tenant people that worked and lived around here too.

You know it's not just about the dead rich white men. And this is what history has been for a long time and it has been changing don't get me wrong but African American history has not been addressed sufficiently.

There had been rumblings but you know I think its people that did not have a voice; who obviously could not write. I mean we don't have any written history so it all this hidden history and here is this graveyard and what is going on?

Who, why, who are these people that are buried here - who are these people and they find one headstone and it is S. A. Williams. And this person dies in 1851 and we can't read the stone. I mean, I don't know how many hours I spent looking at photo shopping the stone in different ways and trying to see if I find markings on the stone.

I don't know if I ever told you about this Mary it's fascinating. There are markings, carvings on the bottom part of the stone which are very suspicious as far as African cosmogram beliefs.

Mary: Now you mean at the bottom of the stone that would be under the earth or at ground level?

Maddy: At one time it probably was not but underneath the inscription there was an oval; there was a circle carved around the pertinent genealogical information and underneath that there are faint etchings. And there's been other documentation of such types of things on African American headstones in other parts of Virginia. Very few examples but I think again as this starts, we start another example and another – you know it's all starting to come out of the woodwork. I think it's just right now it's all coming forward in a way.

So anyway looking at the Guinea Road cemetery this becomes my passion. I have to figure this out that just that's all there is to it. (Laughing) So see there are ties

Both Mary and Maddie react to lights going off.

Mary: We pause because the lights went out

Maddy: and then went back on (laughing).

Mary: Okay go ahead.

Maddy: Um I you know it ties into me not to go too much into myself but it is - I do acknowledge that it is relevant to what I do; is my own personal journey and story and history which is I am adopted. And when I was born at Ft. Belvoir I was born to a young woman who I was not raised by. Um and that was something that coupled with my love of history throughout my whole life, for me as an adoptee it was I would always search for my birth family. It wasn't if, it was when you know it was just genealogical connections roots, heritage it's very important to me I find it intriguing. But for myself personally it was clearly something that would done at some point and I did do that in 2000. And I did search and find my birth family and they are also coincidentally, if I had been raised by my birth mother and father I would have been a Williams just like the stone in the cemetery.

Mary: Oh wow.

Maddy: It's kind of interesting. Um and so you know and they are all amateur archeologist and it is just really kind of…….

Mary: It is in your genes.

Maddy: It's in the genes. And the others are artists and jewelry designers and you know it's kind of – it's just an amazing - it was just incredible thing for me to do and it was incredibly meaningful. It was you know and it's still meaningful in different you know – it's just a continue of how relationships evolve. And it is very pertinent to what I do now because I knew exactly what it was like not to know where I came from. And just like Dennis Howard, see that's where it resonated with me and Dennis Howard tells the story and I know that it's in his Book; and he's given this assignment that you have to trace your lineage back.

You know I was given that same assignment at some point in my sort of late elementary, middle school career. And I remember being, I was more of an internal angry person you know what I mean. I wouldn't have lashed out or

anything like that but I remember being horrified. I could not do that but I could do it through my adoptive family. But you see that was the thing well that's your family - well yes it is my family but it is not my blood lineage - there is a difference. At least to me there was a difference. There was a pronounced difference and I was very envious of other people who could just go to it. It didn't matter where they came from or what their lineage was it was the fact that they could do it. And that has always been very – that didn't – that never sat well with me. So I have this natural understanding.

Mary: Let's just interject for a minute. Dennis Howard as a seventh grader what was his assignment?

Maddy: He had to trace his lineage back to England I believe.

Mary: Right, right.

Maddy: And he was African American kid who was also always interested in history from what I understand but how does he tell the story? He did finally finish it, it took him forty years but he did.

Mary: It took him a lifetime, but he did.

Maddie: He did indeed.

Mary: Well it was clearly an assignment the teacher had given years and years and years.

Maddy: Exactly.

Mary: And this is the first time an African American student was in her classroom, so.

Maddy: Exactly

Mary: Okay.

Maddy: And where do you go from that you know you can trace back to your grandparents, maybe your great grandparents but after that? You know again,

there is oral history especially in the black community. You know the oral history of - well this is where we come from this is where you know - you may even know the name of the slave owner, you may know you were free blacks, you may know you come from a certain part of Virginia or part of the county or the country. But you know, you don't know necessarily much more. And having said that, you know my mother - when I say my mother I will say biological or birth mother if I'm referring to my birth parents.

Mary: Yes.

Maddy: When I say mother I am speaking about my adoptive mother. My mother's family came from Poland circa 1900. Well you know we can't get much farther back there either - a lot of them died in the holocaust where lines got wiped out completely, so I mean there is a mystery there too. So I have to say there is not just African American people there are clearly are lots of situations where you are completely blocked from those records.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: But, the African American genealogy I identified with because it was people who wanted that information and were denied that access. Just not anything overt now but because of what happened I am not sure I am going to actually going to be able to verbalize this correctly because I am still trying to formulate a lot of the ideas in my head right now too. I mean as I learn my opinions develop as well and I have to acknowledge I am very early into this. But I just feel like there is a need and there is a need for there to be a facilitator i.e., myself.

For an African American person to say okay I want to trace my lineage back to, you know I want to break through that wall to slavery. It is very difficult to do that on your own. People can do it. People have done it but it is - experienced genealogist it is a difficult - it is a hard thing to do. So and I just feel that that kind of restriction is unfair, it's very unfair. And, the information is out there and that is one thing I am trying to do, I am trying to put these pieces together so it makes it easier for the person who says I want to know my lineage. I can do that leg

work because that's what I'm good at; and it's actually a lot easier to do it for lots of people at once.

Mary: Individual, yes.

Maddy: Because as opposed to individual, you know when you are looking at family groups, kin groups, communities as a whole or plantations, it is easier to do it in a bigger scope, I think.

Mary: Well and traditionally historians have demanded documentation and on the oral history of blacks

Maddy: Absolutely.

Mary: I mean the blacks don't have that documentation.

Maddy: Right, exactly.

Mary: They were denied the right to read or write etc., and so oral history is very important.

Maddy: Absolutely, oral history is what there is and as generations did learn to read and write then you aren't talking about a family bible being brought in.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: Yes, but it's not like people stopped bringing those things in those are few and far between in my experience, they do exist. But you know it is also something that people don't necessarily want to just whip out as well. I mean they are guarded; they are very special treasures. And you know not necessarily wanting to hand over that information that's another thing I have to deal with. I mean I am talking, you know you can't - I am a Caucasian woman I am not an African American woman and one person at a time you know I think that I also have to gain access and gain trust.

The African American community as it's been put to me and also in my observations has been burned quite a bit in this kind of thing. Slavery is a very touchy aspect and it goes down to identity. You know - who are you but you're

not allowed to know and yet people might try to take advantage of that. It's just there's so much baggage attached with it so I understand the hesitation. But I - one person at a time you know I have to try and prove my dedication really.

Mary: And gain their trust.

Maddy: And gain their trust and then I and that's another resource for me as far as being able to understand community and family.

Mary: See you got involved with the Guinea Road Cemetery.

Maddy: Yeah, right the Guinea Road Cemetery.

Mary: And that led to...

Maddy: That led to what is was is that in effect trying to identify who was buried there. We have one name to go on, you know, and it's an initial for gosh sake too. If it only had said Samuel or Sarah Williams, but no, no, because it could be either one of those that is the thing.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: I mean I'm still and I'm still – and I don't know if I will ever be 100% certain who that individual was. I mean I'm 99% sure but that's for me that is not quite good enough.

Mary: Right, you want that little documentation.

Maddy: Absolutely. But there you go and that's part of the thing that this documentation may never come.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: And that's just something that I've learned has to be accepted. This is not 100%. You can do as best as you can with the resources and the sources you have but because of the lack of direct information it's never going to be comparable to Caucasian American genealogy - so. But having said that – so Guinea Road that was the goal to find out who this person was and in turn finding

- so when I started trying to figure out who this individual could be I basically started figuring out who everybody was except for this one person. But it kind of made me realize - and I started looking into these old wills, old deeds and things where any kind of slave transaction inventory where slaves are named. And I started looking at these in a whole new way. Getting just copies of historic documents and seeing these clues in these documents but that was kind of what it like oh wait a second - through this one person it was like this whole portal opened as far as names and identity. It's like oh wait a second there's like this bigger thing going on here. We may not know who S. A. Williams is but my God we are absolutely picking out everyone else around S. A. Williams. So it's kind of – and then that's just spread.

And then I just started looking at oh my God there are these kin patterns with people, you know because I am starting to understand the a – I'm putting my fingers up for quotes right now, in quotes "Caucasian American white families the owners". And I am looking at how they all lived and where they go, you know, because their property cause this is what it is their enslaved property go with them, they go out to different places.

And then you start looking at relationships and how if like a child is sent, you know, to a different county in Virginia does that child ever come back? How do we start looking at how they are disbursing out across the land because it's not their choice? And freed blacks is a different situation but in enslaved people it's not their choice. You have to follow the white families to see where the black families go. And then you can start looking at kin lines, and how people interrelate. And sort of - I like to think of it as a neighborhood, who's your neighborhood, what neighborhood do you affiliate with? You're born at Ravensworth and yet you go to a daughter who moves to Warrenton. What neighborhood are you affiliating with if you are one of - if you are the slave that goes with that daughter? Your home base is Ravensworth because Maybe that's where your mother still is and you go out to Warrenton you still sort of direct yourself, I think, towards Ravensworth. And then after the war, and I am talking later years here - later Antebellum years because every time period does has

different situations cause it also goes on economics. But after the war is finding these people coming back to each other and that's been incredibly fascinating.

Mary: Are you talking after the Civil War?

Maddy: Yes, I am talking about after the Civil War right.

Mary: Tell us and I think you mentioned it, what kind of talking about documentation tell me what kind of documents that you are actually finding information cause if somebody listens to this you know and says well I want to do some more research, where would they look?

Maddy: Well let's say, I mean and I start with a slave owning family because that's sort of the information that I know. Let's take the Fitzhugh family as an example because they are local and besides the Mason family and the Washington's but I'd say in the 1800's they are the largest slave owning family in the county - and there are several of them and they are all sort of in the general same area.

So if you take the Fitzhugh's and I say okay I want to know who lived in Oak Hill. Who are the slaves of Oak Hill? So I know and I go and I find that Richard Fitzhugh lives at Oak Hill and he lives there from this year to this year. So I say okay great I've got thirty years let's say of known habitation and knowing that he's got slaves and I can look at census records. You know most censes records and every year has them that's a great place to start so I can say okay in 1840 he has ten slaves and in 1830, I may not know anything about names or anything like that but I know there are ten enslaved individuals living on that property which is 800 acres. So I have some sort of an idea where I am going. I know I don't have 800 but I am looking at roughly ten let's say.

And then I say, okay when did Richard Fitzhugh die. Well he dies okay let's say 1830 - I go and look for a will. First thing always look for a will because it's property. He's got a lot of property and you don't want that just going out scattered to the wind and people come in and trying to figure out – it gets crazy. People are going to write a will and most of the time they did; and Richard Fitzhugh might say okay to my wife Susannah I leave Sukie, okay bingo right there.

We know Sukie is going to be a girl and we have slave number one Sukie. So, when I inventory this person she is going to become Richard Fitzhugh or RF initials RF 1 Sukie, we have a name. So that's like and then to my daughter I'm going to leave James and Cecelia, oh okay great. And they may say Cecelia who's the daughter of Sukie ahhhh! okay this is great.

Mary: You are putting together a puzzle.

Maddy: Right, exactly so I am looking at that and they are all get – you know they are all their own identified individuals and I look at them all like each person is their own self. But, now I know that Cecelia is the daughter of Sukie, that is gold right there.

So hopefully what's going to happen in a will there's going to be that kind of thing. And sometimes there are and in the case of William Fitzhugh, you know, he has 200 slaves and he doesn't name them all but he says I want, you know, the 80 slaves that are now located on the center field; oh my God what the heck is center field? Well, that's part of Ravensworth farm but he has - and then you can start learning about they're being separated and they are living in these different groups.

Mary: Geographically.

Maddy: Geographically and are they intermarrying in those smaller groups as opposed to being 200 Ravensworth slaves. Sorry, but going back to Oak Hill and Richard Fitzhugh I now let's say that he names ten slaves in his will. And, I now have the names for those ten individuals and then if he dies – and then they come in and inventory the estate - 90% of the time this was done and 10% they did not because they specifically asked for it not to be done - but usually it was done. And then

Mary: Was that for tax reasons?

Maddy: Yes exactly. So they get neighbors; that's the other interesting thing too. They get neighbors who were familiar with Richard Fitzhugh and his property and his holdings come in. And you can then figure out who lives near Richard Fitzhugh

by who is inventorying his estate as well. So all of a sudden we have people coming in and they say okay we have got 18 pots and pans, we've got three beds, two looking glasses a man named Sukie – I'm sorry a woman named Sukie who is 50 years old. And she is worth $100 because she is right there on that list of property she is property. And as far as Human Rights it's hideous, as far as genealogy it's fantastic. You have to look at it that way, it is thank you for doing this because we can now figure this out.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: Horrible but yet

Mary: Yeah, beneficial.

Maddy: Beneficial. So, and then they will inventory and that's the thing too sometimes they don't put ages and sometimes they do. And then you get another you know because there may be three Sukie's because you look at African American naming patterns too. And then, you know there's different ways you can start figuring this stuff out. So at the end of the day you actually have, you know, hopefully just from those two documents a good understanding of who these people. I mean you may not have last names and that's the thing too and that comes later. But maybe some kin lines, who's the mom who's the daughters, who's older so that may be - may be a father and maybe not but you are starting to look at what life is like and who are this group of people and the demographics of it.

Mary: Now on the census are they actually listed by name?

Maddie: No.

Mary: Okay so they are…

Maddy: No they are not and I know in some counties, I don't know apparently every once in a while there will be a county that on the slave enumerations and they only did this in 1850 and 1860 where they go through and do a special census. Every other year they are included as just a number. I have seen counties where they list them by name. We are not one of those counties.

Mary: So they would just say like Richard Fitzhugh and his wife's name and his children's name and then it would just say like it says ten slaves?

Maddy: Yes, right and then on in the later years it would say Richard Fitzhugh and that would be the owner in the column and then it would say female, female, female, you know, mullato, black, 20, 50 you know it would just enumerate them as far by age and skin color even

Mary: Wow.

Maddie: gender, skin color.

Mary: Wow. So basically it is the census and inventories or wills.

Maddy: Wills, it is the probate records in general which are the really extremely helpful records just to get an overall idea of what's going on, on a certain parcel of land. And then I look everywhere else, I mean and that means deeds. Sometimes they were put up as collateral - slaves were you know..

Mary: Like insurance.

Maddy: They were insurance and that would be a deed. (is that okay)

Mary: Yeah.

Maddy: So, there's just different, you have to look at different just tons and tons of documentation. Um, Slaves were emancipated and that was done in a deed. You had to go and file that at the courthouse. I am emancipating my slave Millie and sometimes they would say Millie Thomas, if you're really lucky they were going to put a last name.

Mary: What about Freedman papers because I was talking to someone yesterday about it and he says he has his family's Freedman papers.

Maddy: Umm? He actually has the papers?

Mary: Yes.

Maddie: I would be interested in seeing that, that's really interesting. I've never actually seen.

Mary: That was what I was wondering are they something that the families? They weren't recorded at the courthouse or anything.

Maddy: Well it depends - you mean after emancipation in general? Or are we talking about the Freedman's Bureau?

Mary: No, I think this is before the Civil War.

Maddy: Yes indeed they did have to carry…..

Mary: The papers with them.

Maddy: The papers with them and they had to register at the courthouse.

Mary: Okay.

Maddy: And technically had to register every few years; most people did not. Most freed blacks did not.

Mary: Like the immigrants with the green card.

Maddy: Kind of but wow.

Mary: Yeah.

Maddy: Exactly but you know you could be stopped and I know that probably does happen today in certain parts of the country. But you know you can be, you know, your average citizen could be stopped and you say prove it. Because you know you could be a runaway and runaways did do that too, they would get fake papers. Or they would get forged you know.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: But yeah you had to go and register at the courthouse and that's another fantastic source because you see who's going up together. So maybe ten people go up and register all on the same day. And you kind of - you know, so the court's

open one day a month basically. And if you are going to go up and it is not like oh I am going to go in after the lunch hour is over and they are open from one to four and if I don't I'll do it tomorrow. No, they are open like one day a month and you are walking probably or maybe you're taking a wagon if there's enough of you kind of thing.

So, you are going to the courthouse because you have to register. So ten of you go together but there may not be any seeming connection between those ten people. But the fact that they all came together on one day sends to me, and I have proven this in different cases, that they are coming from one specific location.

Mary: A general location, yeah.

Maddy: Yes, exactly. And that's really interesting to be able to look at in that way too. The great thing about the Freed paper is that having a freed black I.D., I don't know what they technically called it and I have never seen one, that is really interesting is they will have last names.

Mary: That's what I was wondering. And I was wondering about whether they actually signed their names with some of them not being literate or whether they

Maddy: They would mark.

Mary: They would mark, okay.

Maddy: And that was an X and I don't know if I have ever seen a literate, there are some, there are some that do sign and also that goes for property and what not because people – blacks were buying property in this county too.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: But that's an interesting point about the names and that is sort of what this all comes down to as far as the slavery inventory database is being able to trace back. You know if my name is Maddie McCoy today or you know like we'll take a friend of mine who lives in Fairfax County whose African American whose last name's Noel and her married name is Mason. I'm sorry her married name is

Noel and her maiden name is Mason. I have been working with her and that's the information she has - my name's Mason and my mother's name - so let's go. So when you registered as a free black you registered with your name. Well my name is Charles Hansen it's not just Charles its Charles Hansen. And, that is something that is really important; all enslaved people had last names. I come across every once in a while one or two that I just can't, that maybe they really only did have one name; and they are always older, older people meaning the early part of slavery. They are coming over in that early part of slavery in the 1700, 1710. They are native African born and they may not have a surname.

Mary: Do you run into many African names?

Maddy: No, I do not.

Mary: So we probably Anglicized or not Anglicized but forced them to take a

Maddy: I don't know if it is a question, well you know you have to sort of look at immigrant assimilation in that way too. And it's forced immigration assimilation so I'm not saying it is identical. But you know I have not ever come across anyone yet who has also known as and there being an African name. I think it's almost like

Mary: That life has passed.

Maddy: And especially getting you know the second you are born on American soil, now the community around you may still not be speaking brilliant English but I think that as every generation and of course you know that people are having children very early so your rate of generation overturn is not 35 or 30 years like it is today. It may be 16 you know every generation is being more and more assimilated into this enslaved culture. But you know you're naming and sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between white and black names.

I am going to give you another Fitzhugh example and I find this - this is unusual but it's telling. This is Mordecai Cooke Fitzhugh brother to Richard and he lives in a place called Fontaine Bleu which is up in the Sleepy Hollow neighborhood which doesn't exist. No I beg your pardon it does still exist. He has really interesting

slave holdings but he also has like a zillion children Mordecai Cooke does so there's are all these little Fitzhugh's running around and they have all these names. Well guess what it's all like Peter and Richard and all these sort of, the slaves all have the same names too. Now I am not saying that Richard Fitzhugh is the biological father of all these people.

Mary: Biological father but they adopt the same names.

Maddy: They adopt the same names and then and we know this is from the inventory when Mordecai Cooke Fitzhugh dies I am learning this from the inventory. All of the animals, all of the cows all have the same names too. They are all named the same thing. They have a cow named Richard who is being taken care of by the slave Richard, it was like the craziest thing but it's sort of like okay.

You know yes of course there is interracial breeding clearly, clearly and that's like a whole other kettle of fish there; and that is not necessarily something we need to get into that's a whole other area which deserves its own amount of time. But I don't think – I think there was a real strong assimilation factor going on. As far as African heritage I don't think the names were what they held onto. Naming patterns yes because that could be derive back to some African custom. But they are Anglicizing these names and from there they are doing their own thing with it. They are holding onto African customs in other ways but not through names themselves.

Mary: Did most of the slaves then have the last name of their masters?

Maddy: No, no not at all, no. The example again or Fitzhugh's is a very good one, it's local it's a huge population of slaves. And I am talking of William Fitzhugh of the Ravenswood Plantation itself which was on the Southside of Braddock Road. When he dies there are 208 slaves and not one of them has the name of Fitzhugh. They've got a lot of other surnames going on there and those have been figured out almost down to the person; but there are no Fitzhugh's among them.

The Masons another huge Fairfax County slave holding family. I have come across a few Masons after the Civil War. But in the slave records like I was telling you how I do this – you know when I find out and I start pulling stuff from records, I

think I have one that may be a Mason, one. I mean we're talking out of hundreds of people and that is just that is incorrect.

Mary: Yeah, that has been a belief for years and years.

Maddy: Yes, yes and that is a very widely, strongly held belief. And that's another thing too you know people I have heard people use the example why do you think there are so many Washington's? Why are there so many African American people today named Washington? I have heard people say that and I started thinking that myself but I started looking into it. First of all Washington did not have any children.

Mary: Right he had no children.

Maddy: He had no children so he had no direct lineage but you know in 1870 there weren't that many Washington's actually amongst the African American population after the war in this county - like maybe one or two. I don't know if people actually maybe people admired him or I don't know you hear different things.

Mary: So I'm wondering maybe after Emancipation..

Maddy: You know well you know after 1870 there really aren't and then all of a sudden there seems to be a lot of African American names too if you look at census records for recent, you know, that's a very, very common name amongst the African American surname in the African American community. So it is kind of interesting so you kind of don't always know where, well that would more research.

Mary: Origin and you may never even be able to lock it down as to

Maddy: Absolutely right, but you know I have heard people say well why do you think there are a lot of black Washington's. Well Actually I don't know, you know actually no so that's the thing it's breaking down maybe some of the myths some of the - I don't - it's new this is new information.

Mary: Now what are you doing as you gather up all this information? Where are you putting it and how is it going to be used for research?

Maddy: Right, so what I am making I guess may not be the right word I'm not sure, because you make cakes you know you don't – I'm making a database. It's called the Fairfax County Virginia Slavery Inventory Database. It is compiling so every time I start looking at different pieces of probate or Will I am starting to go through the families of Fairfax County and trying to figure out who the enslaved people were belonging to whom. And then just like I was saying trying to crack those genealogical cases and trying to get those surnames. Going family by family is how I am doing it. I am going by the white slave holding family in the county, in this county just going through them. And I then I'm compiling them and I'm finding out as much information as I can. It is sort of an information clearing house but organized into where these people would have lived and trying to do the genealogy there as much as I possibly can.

Mary: So, birth, marriage, death if you can.

Maddy: If I can or you know in the case of the earlier it's like we know like so and so is Suki's daughter; that may be all we ever know, but we know that. So trying to like match, you know making these trees even though I may not go into extensive genealogy but trying to get some structure into place as far as kin lines.

Mary: And how many family or names have you entered into your database?

Maddy: Right, now there's about two thousand enslaved individuals.

Mary: Wow, right.

Maddy: And it's roughly about 15% that I have surnames for. So and that is after a year. So I should say I have received a grant from the History Commission almost a year ago and it is almost up. And so this has been sort of the year's work it's about two thousand individuals.

Mary: Out of how many?

Maddy: Well we could look at different records and that's a good gauge or it's a snapshot of who was there in 1850 but you have to - I don't know what would be the answer. I mean more than ten thousand for sure. I mean we're probably going to be many tens of thousands if not more. I mean I'd really like to know.

Mary: Any you are committing yourself to do - as many as you can?

Maddy: Yeah, this is you know I feel very strongly about this. Somehow I'm just naturally able to – you know what I mean - the right place, it all just fits so beautifully. I just really love to do this. There are so many aspects of it which are so satisfying and so interesting. You know genealogy is so awesome to be able to do that. But you know again finding some of these communities that we never knew about, understanding more about free blacks, understanding more about just African American life in this county and in this State in general. We don't know really anything and it just adds a whole other dimension to who we are, you know it effects everybody. You know even though you may have arrived from Viet Nam five years ago and settled in Fairfax County well you know your children might marry people who are 250 year Fairfax County born. You know what I mean it all ends up, it all pertains to us somehow.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: It just may not be relevant in the exact moment and that doesn't mean it won't be.

Mary: And you told me a story about the Morris Gibson and Moses Parker and I'd like you to tell the story about how they settled in Ilda but you believe that Moses Parker may have come to Fairfax, from the Culpeper Plantation as a freed slave for a specific reason.

Maddy: I think Moses Parker was born in Fairfax County into the Fitzhugh family and went with a sib a child, I sorry a child not a sibling, a child of the Fitzhugh child to Culpeper and was raised there. I mean we know who his - so basically I can sort of take Dennis Howard's genealogy at this point and kind of take it back a lot further because here is Moses Parker but he's gone. He's here as a young kid and then he is gone and then he comes back but the rest of - most of the rest of

his family stays and that's kind of interesting just because of the disbursal of the slaves in that particular family. You know just a couple of kids left so only a couple of slaves left with them the rest stay. So he comes back.

Mary: Probably to find his family roots or well we're just guessing?

Maddy: Well I don't know - he probably never because there is so much communication too going back and forth between the white families and they come and they visit and vice versa I mean I think there are real open lines of communication.

Mary: So he knew where his family was.

Maddy: I think that there was constant information going back and forth and so you know when things are changing in 1860, 61 he's - comes back because this is his kin.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: His family has been here for generations at this point, he's the only one so it's natural for him it seems to me like a very natural fit to – I mean there's land opportunity here. They know the people who are willing to sell them land; it's on an incredible location, I mean it is ideal.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: The fact that he's black I don't even know if that even makes a difference. I mean honestly the reports you hear, the actual articles written in the paper, about like you know - those two are just so interesting because I really, I think they were such incredibly respected people in the community - period. Color is not brought into it.

Mary: And issue.

Maddy: Exactly.

Mary: And it's believed that it's their descendants that are buried in the Guinea Road Cemetery. I mean that is something you know.

Maddy: Yes, it is believed but I have to say because I have done a lot of work into that; their descendants are buried in a lot of cemeteries in Fairfax County and I am talking from Clifton to Falls Church.

Mary: Right. Well and we've gone full circle with the Guinea Road Cemetery.

Maddy: Yeah as it always does.

Mary: And you are continuing with this?

Maddy: Yes.

Mary: And hoping to - I mean it's going to be an absolute wonderful ah, product when it's done and the county will definitely benefit, you know, from it. And it seems like if you could get people enlisted to help you that would certainly make the job a little bit easier.

Maddy: Yeah, yeah I think so. I'm at the point where I'm ready for some volunteers.

Mary: Yeah, well I wanted to ask you one other thing because we started saying about as a kid that you were always interested in archeology and digging up your back yard, did you ever find anything.

Maddy: No. (Both laughing)

Mary: But it didn't dissuade you.

Maddy: It didn't dissuade me though I'd just moved to another spot.

Mary: Yeah, right, right.

Maddy: No it's not.

Mary: I was just curious.

Maddy: That's funny yeah.

Mary: Along with this project besides doing this data base you are also establishing family trees which goes along with the database.

Maddy: Absolutely, I mean that's just a byproduct of this whole thing

Mary: Right.

Maddy: is that as I come across any kind of genealogy I've just been entering that too and low and behold that all starts connecting up too.

Mary: And this is white and black.

Maddy: I have separate trees. Now, sometimes they do cross over.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: So they attach on many different levels but yes I've been trying to keep it by race because that is historically how it has – that's where the lay of the land is.

Mary: Right.

Maddy: It had to have been separated so mine are separated and acknowledge connected – the connections are acknowledged when they are absolutely certain. But yes and that's

Mary: So you're not doing Sally Hemming Thomas Jefferson?

Maddy: No.

Mary: That's not Fairfax County anyway.

Maddie: No.

Mary: But that's always what people always thing about in terms of

Maddy: There are examples of that. But you know to document that and I do have documented examples and it all seems to be in the South Western Quadrant of Fairfax County

Mary: Wow.

Maddy: which is kind of interesting where I have really open interracial living and I don't know how prevalent that was but it seems to me right now I'm discovering it in that Quadrant so that is another…

Mary: What is the most exciting thing (we've got about two minutes here) what is the most exciting thing you've have discovered? I know all of it is but..

Maddy: You know I think Mrs. Bush Rod down at Gunston Hall. This is a woman who is almost 100 years old and I have been working with their church, Shiloh Baptist Church for a year now. And to be able to have connected her to, you know to be able to do her genealogy and that they are indeed descendants of Mason slaves. Um, and the family has indeed been on that land and in Maryland and have come back, you know for hundred's.

Mary: It's like touching George Mason, indirectly.

Maddy: It is incredible, but what an amazing beautiful family and it's just neat connections and it enriches, I think - grounding.

Mary: Right, thank you very much.

Maddy: Sure.

Mary: It has been wonderful.